

SENATOR BETH BYE

Fifth District

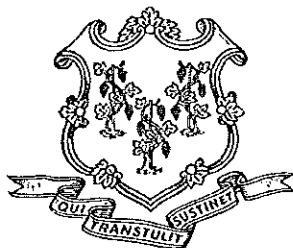
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February 10, 2015

Testimony to the Joint Committee on Human Services
SB 795 An Act Concerning A Two-Generational School Readiness And Workforce
Development Plan

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Beth Bye, State Senator representing the 5th District Towns of West Hartford, Farmington, Burlington, and Bloomfield.

I am here today to testify in support of SB 795, which aims to change the way we approach state support for Connecticut families in need of assistance. The State of Connecticut's implementation of its varied state and federal programs intended to help families creates a complex maze for families in their efforts to move forward towards self-sufficiency. We lack a system that approaches the needs of the family. Our system splits the family into separate parts and across many agencies. A coordinated two-generational approach to address poverty and job insecurity can more efficiently and effectively address the needs of the family by providing easier access to the tools for self-sufficiency.

The Aspen Institute, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Foundation for Child Development have been promoting a two generational approach nationally, and their efforts have been at the forefront. I am grateful to the Commission on Children for their work with these issues. Examples of coordinated access to supports may include options like supporting parents in the workforce with adult educational supports and technical opportunities, while providing high quality childcare, and addressing transportation challenges.

Breaking down Connecticut's current approach to an individual with all of those needs- the parent would need to interface with the Departments of Labor, Early Childhood, Education and Transportation to access all related services. Imagine if that same parent—in need of workforce supports—could walk into his or her local workforce board or adult education center and have a single point of contact to access all needed supports for successfully starting a job?

The Committee on Human Services is a critical partner in creating a pilot two-generational development plan for the State of Connecticut. While there can be many ways to begin to change our approach to families in need of support, there has been much planning work done in Connecticut by a two-generation working group. Their report has ten recommendations. I want to highlight a few that I hope you consider when I ask to draft a two-generation bill:

1. To provide agency leadership and staff members with cross-agency comprehensive training to assist in creating a plan for the economic stability of low-income families.

2. To support an inter-agency workgroup that will collaboratively offer services and solutions to addressing barriers to two-generational families.
3. To extend time limits on training and broaden access to both academic and work based Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programming.
4. To pilot- on a larger scale- some successful evidence-based two-generation programs currently working in Connecticut.
5. To look at ways the legislature and public can have input into the state's TANF plan to maximize those dollars to live up to their name of: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Over the years, these dollars have shifted to fund the administration of state agencies and programs. Working with the administration, I believe we can make these dollars live up to their name and be used almost solely to actually assist need families, with emphasis on the families.

I would also like to share information from the Department of Social Services' quarterly TANF expenditure report.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of this important bill, and I am open to any questions the members might have.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Bye". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, stylized "B" and "Y".

Beth Bye

TANF Federal Expenditures FFY 2014

